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*kregen*). The novel referred to was first published in 1862. Is it likely that in this pretext to break off the game an indication of the Dutch or German origin of the slang use of the expression is given?

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### *Slick-free OR stick-free?*

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—In Shirley's *The Young Admiral* (Gifford's ed., pp. 128–160), the phrase "Slick and shotfree" occurs five times, and the phrases "free from slick and shot" and "slick free" once each. Gifford, evidently puzzled by the expression, invents this explanation: "Whether *slick* was a cant phrase for a sword (or *steel*), from its smooth and polished appearance, I know not; wherever the word is used, as here, in combination with *shot*, it evidently bears a meaning of this kind." He also states, somewhat vaguely, that "the expression . . . is found in other writers of Shirley's time." Nares' *Glossary* (ed. Halliwell and Wright) gives the word *slick-free*, defining it as "impervious to a sword or other slick weapon," and adds that the word occurs in Holbyand. An examination of the quarto edition of *The Young Admiral* (1637) shows that at least three times the word is printed *stick* instead of *slick*. Gifford, thinking this a misprint, silently changed the reading. But is it not more than probable that *stick-free* is the form that Shirley wrote? It has the merit of being intelligible, while *slick-free*, in spite of Gifford's effort to explain it, is meaningless. Compare, for example, the German *stichfrei*,—invulnerable. Moreover, Burton (*Anatomy of Melancholy*), in the chapter "Of Witches and Magicians" (part I, sect. II, mem. i, subsection iii, or vol. I, p. 233 of Shilleto's edition), has this passage: "They (*i. e.* witches) can make stick frees, such as shall endure a rapier's point, musket shot, and never be wounded." The passage is especially pertinent, because Burton has in mind the same kind of witchcraft and charms that Shirley is ridiculing in the scenes referred to.

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### BRIEF MENTION

*Shakespearian Punctuation*. By Percy Simpson (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911). This book should have the effect of diverting a share of attention from attempts at emendations of the text to a better appreciation of the meaning of its original punctuation. More important than many a verbal change is the correct punctuation of, for example, the opening lines of the 84th sonnet:

"Who is it that says most which can say more  
Than this rich praise that you alone are you"

Here a mark of interrogation has erroneously become fixed after "which" (here a relative pronoun) and at the end of the second line (p. 13). Mr. Simpson has made a valuable contribution to the study of Shakespeare by considering the system of punctuation of the First Folio and of the first edition of the sonnets as a coherent whole. The old system is thus acquitted of the charge of being the haphazard result of the printers' ignorance. But more than this, the system, "on the whole sound and reasonable," is found to be worthy of 'poetic study,' because it reveals not only the sense of many a passage that has been distorted by modern points, but also the rhythm and cadence of the text, and features of the master's style. To illustrate the last statement, it is a valid induction that shows a feature of Shakespeare's style and rhythm to lurk in an avoidance of monotony "by putting an adjective with the second pair" of a double antithesis. Thus, *Macbeth* I, ii, 57 is correctly printed in the First Folio:

"Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm"

The old system of punctuation, from Spenser to Milton, is, of course, to a very considerable extent rhythmic, and therefore free, in contrast to the modern logical and grammatical system with its rigid rules and stubborn fashions. Mr. Simpson has arranged his material under the 'points' of punctuation. A cross-classification, under the logical categories, would perhaps have served his purpose better. The book is incomplete in range of matter and inconclusive in method of examination; but it must show the importance of studying the rhythmic and rhetorical principles underlying this neglected system of punctuation. The classical scholar has been trained in the observation of a long tradition of rhythmic prose (for a bibliography of the subject see *Am. Journal of Phil.*, xxv, 454, note), and he therefore comes to the reading of an author like Robert Greene (see Professor K. F. Smith, *id.*, xxxii, 346) with the conviction that the 'old fashioned' punctuation served with consistency a rhetoric